

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 ACDA-07 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13 BIB-01 EURE-00 /086 W
-----271836Z 086410 /50

P R 271630Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8007
INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
USMISSION BERLIN UNN
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMCONSUL LENINGRAD
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
USLO PEKING
CINCPAC
USDEL SALT TWO GENEVA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MOSCOW 7553

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: CH, UR
SUBJECT: SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS: BLISTERING SOVIET NOTE

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REF: (A) PEKING 1078, (B) MOSCOW 6714

SUMMARY: THE SOVIETS HAVE PUBLISHED THE TEXT OF A DIPLO-
MATIC NOTE TO THE PRC WHICH BLASTS PEKING FOR ITS ANTI-
SOVIET POLEMICS. THE NOTE, WHICH DOES NOT REFER TO ANY
SPECIFIC RECENT EVENT, MAY HAVE BEEN TRIGGERED BY
NEW AND STRONGER CHINESE STATEMENTS (BY PEOPLE'S

DAILY AND THE LEADERSHIP), BY SOVIET FRUSTRATION THAT RELATIONS HAVE NOT IMPROVED SINCE MAO'S DEATH, BY THIRD WORLD DEVELOPMENTS AND BY THE PROSPECTS FOR FURTHER STEPS IN U.S. OR JAPANESE RELATIONS WITH CHINA. THE TONE IS INFLAMMATORY; IT RAISES SOVIET POLEMICS TO THEIR HIGHEST LEVEL IN AT LEAST THREE YEARS. BUT IT DOES NOT THREATEN SPECIFIC SOVIET ACTION. END SUMMARY.

1. ALL CENTRAL SOVIET MEDIA PUBLICIZED THE NOTE ON THE EVENING OF MAY 26, INDICATING THAT IT HAD BEEN DELIVERED TO THE PRC EMBASSY IN MOSCOW ON MAY 19. THE REPORT DOES NOT STATE THAT IT IS THE FULL TEXT, BUT THERE ARE NO INDICATIONS OF OMISSIONS.

2. ASSUME DEPARTMENT, PEKING AND HONG KONG HAVE TEXT. MAIN POINTS ARE:

-- PEKING'S ANTI-SOVIET "CAMPAIGN" IS BECOMING MORE INTENSE, WITH PARTICIPATION BY "PROPAGANDA ORGANS AND OFFICIALS AT ALL LEVELS." IT DOES NOT DIFFER, AND IN FACT IS IN ACCORD WITH "IMPERIALIST" EFFORTS.

-- IT INCLUDES "ATTEMPTS TO INTERFERE IN THE AFFAIRS OF OUR COUNTRY."

-- MOSCOW'S EFFORTS TO IMPROVE RELATIONS ARE KEPT FROM THE CHINESE PEOPLE AND ARE DISTORTED THROUGH "DEMAGOGICAL TRICKS."

-- PEKING PREACHES THAT WAR IS INEVITABLE "AND EVEN DESIRABLE," WHILE DETENTE IS "ANATHEMA."

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-- CHINESE CHARGES ARE "INCOMPATIBLE WITH THE ELEMENTARY NORMS" BETWEEN COUNTRIES HAVING DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS.

-- THIS COURSE "IS FRAUGHT WITH DANGEROUS CONSEQUENCES AND DOES NOT ACCORD WITH THE INTERESTS OF THE CHINESE PEOPLE THEMSELVES." THOSE WHO SEEK A "CRUSADE" AGAINST THE USSR SHOULD REMEMBER HOW SUCH EFFORTS ENDED IN THE PAST.

-- THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT WARNS THE CHINESE LEADERS THAT THEY "ARE ASSUMING A GREAT RESPONSIBILITY TO THEIR PEOPLE FOR THE CONSEQUENCES OF CONTINUING THIS CAMPAIGN."

3. IT IS HIGHLY UNUSUAL FOR EITHER SIDE TO REPLY TO PROPAGANDA ATTACKS, HOWEVER STRONG, WITH A DIPLOMATIC NOTE. THIS RAISES SHARPLY BOTH THE LEVEL OF AUTHORITY AND THE LEVEL OF THE IMPLICIT THREAT. THE NOTE DOES NOT REFER TO ANY SPECIFIC EVENT WHICH TRIGGERED IT, AND WE ARE NOT AWARE OF ANY RECENT INCIDENTS (E.G.

ON THE BORDER). BUT WE CANNOT RULE OUT THIS
POSSIBILITY.

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P R 271630Z MAY 77
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8008
INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
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4. MORE LIKELY, IN OUR VIEW, IS THAT MOSCOW WAS STUNG
BY THE PEOPLE'S DAILY BLAST OF MAY 13 WHICH STRONGLY
DENOUNCED "SOCIAL-IMPERIALISM" AND WARNED SPECIFICALLY
OF A SOVIET NUCLEAR THREAT TO CHINA FOR THE FIRST
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TIME SINCE 1970 (FBIS TRENDS, 18 MAY, 1977). TOGETHER WITH RECENT STATEMENTS BY CHAIRMAN HUA KUO-FENG AND VICE CHAIRMAN YEH CHIEN-YING IDENTIFYING THEMSELVES EXPLICITLY WITH MAO'S ANTI-SOVIET LINE, THE PD ARTICLE MAY HAVE SET THE SOVIETS OFF. THIS DOES NOT EXPLAIN THE LEVEL OF AUTHORITY, BUT THE MOST RECENT SOVIET BLAST, THE "ALEKSANDROV" ARTICLE OF MAY 14, (REFTEL B), WAS ALREADY BEING PUBLISHED WHEN THE PD ARTICLE APPEARED, AND THE SOVIETS MAY HAVE FELT THAT A LOUDER CANNON WAS CALLED FOR. THE INTENSITY OF THE LANGUAGE ALSO BETRAYS SOVIET FRUSTRATION THAT THEIR EARLIER GESTURES WERE FLATLY REBUFFED. THEY MAY ALSO BE HAVING SOME DOUBTS THAT HUA'S POSITION IS AS FRAGILE AS THEY HAD EXPECTED, AND THAT IN ANY CASE THERE IS LITTLE PROSPECT FOR BETTER RELATIONS IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE REGARDLESS OF WHO HEADS THE CHINESE LEADERSHIP. FINALLY, THEY MAY FEEL THAT THE APPARENT DEBATE ON MODERNIZING THE CHINESE MILITARY BODES ILL FOR THEM OVER THE LONGER RUN.

5. OTHER EVENTS WHICH MAY HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THIS SOVIET OUTBURST INCLUDE THIRD WORLD RIVALRY, ESPECIALLY IN AFRICA (REF A). THE TWO SIDES HAVE EXCHANGED SHARP WORDS OVER AFRICA SINCE THE ANGOLA EVENTS, AND MORE RECENTLY ABOUT ZAIRE. THE FACT THAT THE CHINESE "WON" THE MOST RECENT ROUND (IN THE SENSE THAT THEY OPENLY BACKED MOBUTU) MAY HAVE HEIGHTENED MOSCOW'S DESIRE TO CRITICIZE PEKING'S POLICIES. LIKEWISE, THE EXCHANGE OF INSULTS AT THE MAPUTO CONFERENCE WOULD HAVE BEEN ANTICIPATED (ALTHOUGH THE CHINESE SPEECH ON MAY 18 WOULD HAVE COME TOO LATE TO AFFECT THE SPECIFICS IN THE SOVIET NOTE THE FOLLOWING DAY).

6. FINALLY, THE NOTE, LIKE THE "ALEKSANDROV" ARTICLE, SEEMS TO BE AIMED AT THOSE (READ THE U.S. CONFIDENTIAL

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AND JAPAN) WHO MAY SEE SOME ADVANTAGE IN SUPPORTING PEKING'S ANTI-SOVIET POSTURE. SOVIET COMMENTATOR ALEKSANDR BOVIN MADE THIS POINT EXPLICIT IN A LONG DIATRIBE IN LITERATURNAYA GAZETA (MAY 25) CALLED "WHAT HAS CHANGED?". THE SOVIETS WOULD BE PARTICULARLY SENSITIVE TO SUGGESTIONS THAT, FOLLOWING SECRETARY VANCE'S RECENT MEETING WITH GROMYKO IN GENEVA, THE SECRETARY'S PLANNED VISIT TO CHINA WOULD BE MOVED FORWARD.

7. WHATEVER THE CAUSES, THIS NOTE CLEARLY RAISES THE POLEMICAL LEVEL ANOTHER SIGNIFICANT NOTCH. AS FAR AS WE CAN RECALL, THERE HAS BEEN NO SIMILAR NOTE SINCE THE BITTER EXCHANGE FOLLOWING THE INCIDENT IN MARCH OF 1974 IN WHICH A SOVIET HELICOPTER CREW WAS DETAINED IN CHINA AFTER CROSSING THE BORDER. IN THAT EXCHANGE THE TONE WAS ALSO VERY SHARP, BUT THE FOCUS WAS ON THAT SPECIFIC EVENT. WE CANNOT RECALL WHEN THE LAST EXCHANGE WAS ON (APPARENTLY) PURELY PROPAGANDA ISSUES.

8. THE TONE OF THE NOTE IS HIGHLY INFLAMMATORY, AND IT SAYS THE CHINESE LEADERS WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR (UNSPECIFIED) CONSEQUENCES. IT DOES NOT THREATEN ANY SPECIFIC ACTION EXCEPT BY IMPLICATION IN THE PHRASE ABOUT CHINESE BEHAVIOR BEING INCOMPATIBLE WITH NORMAL DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS. PERHAPS THE SOVIETS WILL RECALL THEIR AMBASSADOR TO PEKING (THE PRC EMBASSY IN MOSCOW HAS BEEN HEADED BY A CHARGE SINCE EARLY MARCH, 1976).

9. ONE THING IS CLEAR: THE SOVIET "CARROT," EXTENDED AFTER THE DEATH OF MAO IN THE FORM OF SEVERAL HIGHLY-PUBLICIZED GESTURES, HAS BEEN REPLACED BY THE HEAVY "STICK" OF STRIDENT VERBAL COMBAT. IT IS NOT YET CLEAR WHETHER OR NOT THE SOVIETS INTEND TO GO FURTHER.
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